

Episode 40: The Better Understanding of Roofing Systems Institute

Daniel Robbins: Here we are again for another episode of Above It All, a podcast dedicated to the roofing industry by Johns Manville. I am here with Melissa Walker. Melissa, how are you doing?

Melissa Walker: I am good. How are you doing?

Daniel Robbins: I'm doing well. So last time you were here we talked a little bit about BURSI. Let's talk more about it this time. We haven't really touched base on it in a while, and I know there's been some new stuff that has come up. Let's get into the mix right now. So for those listeners that didn't hear our last podcast, let's catch them up to speed on what BURSI is.

Melissa Walker: Yeah, no problem. And again, Melissa Walker. I am the Senior Marketing Manager for our Owner Service Group. So I work a lot with the owners, the design community, and our preferred accounts group. BURSI actually started in 1972, Johns Manville saw a need for technical training for low slope roofing for the architects and engineers. And at that point, it was focused mainly on built-up roofing because obviously in 1972 it hadn't seen the phenomenon of single ply yet. A gentleman by the name of Dick Fricklas, who had been with JM since 1957, he led the program and the very first class was held in June of that year of 1972. He ran that program till the BURSI program till 1979. Over the years, this has been overseen by others such as Ray Corbin, Dave Shire, Hal Shapiro, Alison Rice, and Derek Nikam. Some of these people have since retired from JMs, switched careers, or are actually still with Johns Manville.

Daniel Robbins: Very cool. So in that space, BURSI was really designed to just give people a greater wisdom about roofing. And sorry for those that know what BURSI is already but we wanted to just make sure that people understand this is an education platform so to speak, right?

Melissa Walker: Correct. Yeah, it actually start up the Built Up Roofing Institute but then, of course, migrated to the Better Understanding of Roofing System. And it is an educational program for the design community to come and learn. It's non-proprietary, so it's not a JM pitch. It's get the basic understanding of low slope Roofing. These are accredited programs by AIAA and IBEC. At that time, it was RCI.

Daniel Robbins: And I think one thing that we should say like, yes, you're covering the general gist of roofing, but also too like if you're coming in and you want to understand more about our products, you're absolutely going to get a little bit of knowledge on that, maybe even some hands-on with some of the demoing.

Melissa Walker: Yeah. These classes we have a level one which has been around for a while. They go through the basics. Starting a deck going into insulation, going into cover boards, going in to different membrane types, going into systems. There's demos that happen that show how these things are put together. These programs we've been holding them at our research facility in Littleton, Colorado. They're able to tour our labs as well. Yeah, they might obviously put two and two together like, "Oh, you guys sell this product too." But everybody has these products. So...

Daniel Robbins: Oh, totally?

Melissa Walker: Yeah.

Daniel Robbins: But I think it's a really cool look into like you said that lab or our JMTC Technical Center up in the foothills of the mountains. You get to really see what kind of love goes into the products by touring the lab, the kind of care that we've put into R&D. And then you're going to get to see our products do work well, and they go down easy. But that's not the main part. But you're going to get good demonstrations of from start to finish from the lab to the roof.

Melissa Walker: But just products in general. Like I said, it's non-proprietary because these are for educational point credits.

Daniel Robbins: Absolutely.

Melissa Walker: Like I said, this started in 1972. Last year, it was the 50th anniversary of BURSI. So one of the things that we've done is having... 2021, 2022 gave us a chance to kind of revisit, refresh the level one. This is one of the longest running low slope educational programs around. A gentleman by the name of Jim Koontz who's a very well known consultant in the industry, he even mentioned the JM's BURSI conference during his presentation at the IBEC conference this year in 2023. It was called The First 50 Years of Roofing Consultant, which is kind of flattering.

Episode 40: The Better Understanding of Roofing Systems Institute

Daniel Robbins: That is cool.

Melissa Walker: Yeah. But being that we've had this level one for a while, we had the chance to take in poll consultants and what are some of the other things... You've got the basics. What are some of the other things that we can do? And a group of us came up with a level two program. So this is a day and a half session for the design community again that has modules that cover codes, resiliency, modification. We go through testing processes, which is part classroom and then part going into what we call sector six, which is really cool. We blow a deck. We have a hail cannon. What are the effects of hail with a cover board, without a cover board in different scenarios? So a good visual there. We talk about the different vertical buildings considerations, whether it's cold storage, data centers, what kind of systems should be around to those wall to roof transition and design considerations. So, it's a nice transitions for those that are with new roofing knowledge already, if they're looking for a chance to learn a little bit more.

Daniel Robbins: So correct me if I'm wrong, BURSI level one, intro to the gist of roofing, BURSI level two is really getting into the depths of the why and then the design intricacies.

Melissa Walker: Looking in different scenarios. Again, with BURSI, these classes are intended, for the architects, consultants, specifiers, and owners, these sessions are by no means a substitute for the professional, engineering, design consultant community. These are just educational opportunities. We're manufacturers. We heavily depend on consultants for leading building owners to the right decisions on products.

Daniel Robbins: Well, and I think it's a common thing in the industry for people to, there is a lack of training, like you said, and the fact that we can provide that through these programs I think is probably really appreciated.

Melissa Walker: Yeah. And this year we are doing a couple traveling classes. There are like four modules. We've selected some certain markets, so we're doing some of those classes there in certain states. And we're also going to start seeing more of the lunch and learn opportunities with our specified service team. These are great virtual options for a firm to get an hour of credit, of education during a lunchtime, in many cases they're virtual, but if you, they want somebody to come in, those are some options as well.

Daniel Robbins: That's fantastic. As far as getting involved with these outlets that you're talking about and getting a part of the BURSI program, where can people go to be a part of it?

Melissa Walker: Yeah, so our BURSI we have a landing page on jm.com. So if you go to commercial roofing and you drop down, you'll see it's like the very last tab under design considerations. So there are limited number of people that can attend each class because, we want to make sure we're not having a gigantic area.

Daniel Robbins: How big will each class be?

Melissa Walker: So we tend to keep it about 25 people.

Daniel Robbins: I think that's good. Enough time for questions for everybody to get some face time maybe.

Melissa Walker: Exactly. And we offer level one and level two in the spring and again in the fall. So we are actually working on getting some dates for spring 2024, which is crazy to say right now. I can't believe 2023 is...

Daniel Robbins: I know, it's wild.

Melissa Walker: We're already in August. This is nuts. But yeah, we'll have those up I believe for our fall level one and we just filled up today, so I'll be having to put this sold out.

Daniel Robbins: Okay. So on that note, if people want to get involved, they probably need to get in months in advance. What's a good lead time do you feel like for that?

Melissa Walker: We try to get the dates posted months in advance, so, reach out, via the web, keep an eye open for those dates.

Episode 40: The Better Understanding of Roofing Systems Institute

Daniel Robbins: But don't wait two weeks before the class to sign up.

Melissa Walker: No, no.

Daniel Robbins: Or try to sign.

Melissa Walker: No, no, no. These are kind of a big deal.

Daniel Robbins: It sounds like a big deal to me. And you mentioned the lunch and learns and kind of that added level of, of education. How would people get involved with that stuff?

Melissa Walker: So we have a page dedicated to specifier service. This group actually falls under the Owner Service Group that Mandy Schweitzer leads. So, there's a place where you can request these things. A lot of times, our local sales reps will get the request from a design firm and they'll work directly with our spec service group.

Daniel Robbins: Excellent. So get a hold of your JM local sales rep. Even if you don't plan on buying anything, it's a great outlet to get plugged into what we're trying to do and educate, the industry with. What I've seen is whenever I've gotten to go visit level one, level two, it's the best people that we have to offer here at JM getting to share their expertise. To me, I always learn something every time I walk in, and I, just for all of our listeners, like I am not a roofer, I'm not an engineer, I am a creative, but I feel like just from that standpoint, getting to watch what you guys have put together is very... Like I can take it in, I can understand it. And the levels that you cover really, they allow people to walk away with something even if they didn't have a base.

Melissa Walker: Yeah. And we actually highlight all the presenters on that BURS I page. So if you scroll to the bottom, you can read their bio, find out how they came to JM, what is their background.

Daniel Robbins: Go check out the page, get involved with our program, and reach out to your sales rep because we want to get you involved with this. So with that, we are out of time, but thank you so much for being on the podcast.

Melissa Walker: Thank you.

Daniel Robbins: Until next time, we'll catch you guys later. Be safe. Bye.